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EP-6: NASA’s Webb captures its first image of HD 84406

Season 1, Episode 6 of Astrophysics: Deep In The Space With Maanvinder Pilania

Topic- James Webb Space Telescope and the first Image by James Webb of star HD 84406.

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The James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) is the NASA's largest and most powerful space observatory. The $10 billion James Webb Space Telescope mission launched last Christmas on 25 December 2021 has captured its first image of star HD 84406. NASA released the images in a virtual press conference held on Wednesday (16th March 2022). I still remembers that day when I was discussing about this telescope in the school with my friends; we were discussing about how far James can see and how it will uncover the secrets of universe.

 Star light, star bright…the first star Webb will see is HD 84406, a Sun-like star about 260 light years away. While it will be too bright for Webb to study once the telescope is in focus, it's a perfect target for Webb to gather engineering data & start mirror alignment. pic.twitter.com/DleVjDZz8B

— NASA Webb Telescope (@NASAWebb) January 28, 2022

NASA officials tweeted on Jan. 28 via JWST's official Twitter account and now when the image is released it has surprised everyone with distant galaxies in the background that were previously out of reach.

The first target star of JWST is located in the Big Dipper, which is a part of the Ursa Major constellation. HD 84406 is a star like our sun located about 260 light years away. On 4 February 2022, it was the first star viewed by James Webb Space Telescope. The star is 100 times fainter than what can be seen with the naked eye. The star has a visual magnitude of about 6.9 which is too dim to see with naked eye. You will need a telescope to see it.

The image released by NASA shows a bright shining Orangish star. Even more interesting thing in the image is its background revealing dozens of specks and dots- each a distant galaxy that was previously out of reach.

Thanks for reading!!

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